

Summary

Demographic changes significantly influence the way in which our society is structured and as a consequence, impacts the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired as well as the nature of the types of services required. The factors which are likely to impact the future are increasing age of the population, rise in immigration and increase in the number of people relocating into respective communities. As our population, age 40 and over increases, it also brings with it a number of challenges, coupled with declining health and increase in disabling conditions. In North Carolina, the population by 2014 is expected to increase significantly, thus increasing the number of cases of blindness and visual impairment (U. S. Bureau of the Census, Population Division, State Population Ranking, 2009). In North Carolina, the population 18 and over makes up 24.3 percent of the population, age 65 and over makes up 12.4 percent of the population. Whites make up 73.9 percent, Blacks or African Americans make up 21.6 percent, American Indian & Alaska Native make up 1.3 percent and Asians make up 1.9 percent. Of the total population of 9,036,449, there is approximately 78.4 percent age 16 and over and approximately 12.2 percent age 65 and older (American Community Survey, 2008). Based on the 73.9 percent population of whites, Whites are most often impaired or blind from age-related macular degeneration (Lee, Gomez-Martin, & Lam, 2004).

This assumption is based on the number of individuals who will be diagnosed with vision loss due to other health conditions such as diabetes. Also, an increase in the number of individuals eligible for SSI and SSDI will increase based alone on the aging population in North Carolina which appears to be increasing. Diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma most likely affecting a larger population of minorities is a high concern for the state. In addition macular degeneration which affects a large majority of the elderly will have an impact on the number of individual who apply for SSDI.